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MODERN LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP:
AN ENQUIRY**By* WILLIAM ALBERT NITZE

Por la costume maintenir

De vostre fontainne deffandre.—*Yvain*, 1848 ff.

In choosing this text from my favorite Old French poet, I have no designs on my audience. Be undisturbed; the Red Knight of Arthurian romance shall not obtrude his countenance here and it is indifferent to me—on this occasion—whether there are fairy-mistresses or not. Nor am I, as some of you might think, making the ambitious attempt of defending anew the Pierian Spring. Poetry today needs no defence, unless it be the *défense d'imprimer*, which applies to us all, poets and philologists alike, when our knowledge and inspiration lag, and the product is not worthy of the producer. My task is at once more prosaic and more definite. I propose merely to stand my ground, as a Modern Language teacher and scholar; to state, in my own way, what I think we are about, as one convinced of the value of our profession in itself and to others—despite the blight of misgivings and protests, from one quarter and another, which periodically threatens us with ruin. This, then, is the Spring which your Chairman—like so many Chairmen before him—would defend and, if possible, protect against contamination.

In many respects, the position of the Modern Language profession has never been more favorable than it is today. We have come through the period of the Great War, like the rest of mankind seared perhaps as to our hopes, but on the whole with our consciences clear and our opportunities for work and services greater than before. In making this statement, I do not overlook the fact that our growth has been accompanied by considerable disproportion. The

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German language (and literature) does not yet re-occupy the position to which it is entitled in our school and college curricula, nor is it receiving the attention it should in the field of research. Whatever the causes of this continued neglect may be, and they are not one but many, our German brethren should be encouraged to pursue their subject with some of their old-time ardor—mindful of Schiller's advice:

Immer strebe zum Ganzen, und, kannst Du selber kein Ganzes werden, als dienendes Glied schliess' an ein Ganzes Dich an.

But it takes faith to move scholars as well as mountains, and until we believe that German is needed to accomplish our common task worthily, until it dawns on us that without German the Romance and the English scholar is bound in the long run to err, it may be futile to expect a readjustment. Meantime, let us rejoice in the fact that French, Spanish and even Italian flourish space and that English occupies a philological stronghold which not even Mr. Bryan can profitably assail despite the circumstance that its curve is evolutionary in the highest degree. Call to mind the history of the last hundred years, and you will realize how from the rallying cry of Schlegel—*Pour faire avancer la philologie du moyen âge, il faut y appliquer les principes de la philologie classique*, our "science" has come to occupy the foreground in humanistic studies, to the detriment alas! of that classical philology which we were urged humbly to follow but which no one imagined we should so soon outdistance. I remember hearing the great Gildersleeve say: "How sad it is that I should live to see Greek considered as an Oriental language." And a classical colleague of mine¹ recently stated in a public address: "There was a time when the classics and moderns were arrayed against one another. How childish that debate seems as we look back upon it! It should now be fully recognized that the cause of the one is the cause of the other; that if classical philology goes, all philology will go. They must stand together, as the main bulwark of humanistic

¹ Professor Gordon Laing, *University [Chicago] Record*, VIII.

culture." Coming from a classicist, who is also a distinguished administrator, this *vox clamantis* should not go unheeded.

Thus, admitting that the mantle of the classics has fallen on the shoulders of the moderns, the question is: Are we equal to the occasion? Can the literary and linguistic culture of the ages be safely entrusted to our keeping? Or shall we, as another speaker before this Association once trenchantly said, "Nero-like fiddle away our time while the flame of a misguided ambition consumes the city of our hopes?"

There should be no delay in making two observations: First, we cannot and should not, as the guardians of culture, set our minds primarily on being what is called "practical." Secondly, it is not "practical" to neglect scholarship, for it can be shown that every advance in linguistic and literary teaching has been preceded by an advance in linguistic and literary scholarship.

Let me not be misunderstood. As one of the founders of our *National Federation of Modern Language Teachers*, I should be the last person to minimize the importance of the "art" of teaching. In the language field especially, "the traditional or conventional value of a subject is not sufficient to make it acceptable if it is not well taught" (Ogden in *MLJ* V, 354). Every experienced person knows how difficult is the art of teaching a language in such a country as ours, in which definiteness and continuity of purpose are so rarely obtainable. Where, for example, should the high school leave off and the college begin—in subjects like French and Spanish? If training in the "recognition" of foreign sounds and sentences be the Open Sesame of the language methodists today, at what particular point of instruction does "reproduction" begin? If Phonetics is an essential aid in teaching modern foreign languages, who will design for us a graded course in Phonetics, suited to our national needs? These and a host of other questions the writers for our *Modern Language Journal* are endeavoring to answer, and far be it from me to disparage the worthiness of

their efforts. Let them have all the encouragement they deserve. At the same time, in this swing of the pendulum toward the "practical," there is danger, I believe, of putting the cart before the horse. If we need teachers, still more do we need scholars and the opportunities for scholarship. Or am I, in the terms of the French adage, knocking at an open door?

Let us stop a moment to consider. Those who drew up the Constitution of the Modern Language Association were wisely liberal as to its provisions. They did not exclude from our program, the pedagogy of our subjects, yet they indicated clearly where the chief emphasis of the Association was to be placed. Our object, they said, is "the advancement of the study of the Modern Languages and their Literatures through the promotion of friendly relations among scholars"—and having given this sop to Cerberus—they continued: "through the publication of results of investigation by members, and through the presentation and discussion of papers at an annual meeting." To this general program we have clung tenaciously for nearly forty years, making but two changes in it, each of a subsidiary character. The Central Division has devoted a fraction of its meetings to pedagogical discussions, and last year a program was worked out by Professor Manly to stimulate investigation according to methods which are at once sounder and more comprehensive than those of the past. Thus not only has the Modern Language Association been true to its tenets but it has been progressive in meeting new opportunities. Nevertheless, how do we stand today as measured by the demon, Success? How do we appear to the more intelligent members of the public, whose interests we may be supposed to serve? What recognition and encouragement are legitimately ours?

I need not go so far afield as to interrogate our iconoclastic Menckens for an answer. There are voices, nearer home, ready with a reply if we will but listen to them. Ask any of your respective Boards of Trustees, Overseers or Regents as

to their opinion of our purposes and attainments. "Professor," said a janitor to one of my colleagues the other day, "I did not see your name in the President's bibliography." Surely, where janitors are solicitous, trustees and presidents will know that we have contributed not only pebbles but brick and stone to the building of the *Oxford Dictionary*, the Cambridge *Histories of Literature*, the first complete edition of Cervantes' work, etc., not to dwell on the fact that several of our number have done their share in restoring Irish learning to the literary map of Europe. Undeceive yourselves. Few, if any, of our trustees and presidents, know anything of the kind; and did they, there are other more important matters to engage their attention. What they probably are sadly aware of is that some particular professor of Modern Languages did not enable them to chatter glibly in French or German, overlooking, as Professor Shorey has said, that none of these gentlemen would distinguish himself now "if examined on mediaeval history, conic sections, organic chemistry, or whatever else he happened to elect when in college."² Or to quote again the words of George Eliot, "the depth of middle-aged gentlemen's ignorance will never be known for want of public examinations in this branch." There are of course many reasons why so few of our college graduates learn to speak foreign languages. I need not bore you tonight with an enumeration of them. The fact is that more and more of our college students are learning *to speak* a foreign language and I for my part hope and expect to see their numbers grow. But the mere ability to *speak* a foreign language is here beside the point, and the really lamentable thing for America in general is that so small a number of college graduates have a knowledge of foreign civilizations as reflected in European science, literature and art. Wherever a university trustee or president is himself actively engaged in reading foreign literature of one type or another, you can count upon him to understand and further the

² *School Review*, XVIII, 589.

teaching—and even research—of that branch; but *absit omen*, I am not aware that any such is making himself vociferously heard in our behalf. While the Rockefellers give to Medicine, the Carnegies to History and Economics, and Colonel Thompson lavishes \$10,000,000 on fundamental research in Botany, we, the purveyors of Modern Culture, have practically been left to our own resources.

Professor Spingarn, surveying the scene from his ivory-tower of discontent, would join the ranks of the extremists by questioning whether America has any scholarship to encourage. As a contributor to an enquiry on American Civilization,³ the title of which might properly have been "My Country Right or Wrong, and Mostly Wrong," he glibly *gives us the once over* and concludes: "All is shell, mask, and a deep inner emptiness. We have scholars without scholarship, as there are churches without religion." "No great work of classical learning has ever been achieved by an American scholar," and "a very characteristic academic product is the professor who writes popular articles, sometimes clever, sometimes precious, sometimes genteel and refined, sometimes commonplace, but almost always devoid of real knowledge or stimulating thought."

To the solidier qualities of Professor Spingarn's essay I shall return presently. Nor is there now time to defend our cause, as it deserves, *pugnis et calcibus, unguibus et rostro*. Yet I must observe that America has no monopoly on the unscholarly scholar—he flourishes in other climes as well as ours. Shorey's phrase about "the triple sawdust of Stempfinger's Horaz"—whether justified or not—should put us on our guard against the assumption that European scholarship is prevailingly "stimulating." And I should only be heaping coals or fire on Professor Spingarn's head if I observed that *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* is a pioneer scholarly work of the first order, by an American. If—as our critic affirms—Gilbert Murray, Croiset, and Wilamowitz are

³ *Civilization in the United States*, 1922, pp. 93–108.

European scholars with whom "it would be unfair to suggest comparison," what about Whitney, Child, Gummere, Kittredge and Shorey? Are not these names significant enough to challenge comparison? Or is there an inherent difference in scholarship, according to whether it has the European or American trade-mark? Frankly I believe the profession is far better off than Professor Spingarn will admit. Young as America is, it has an honorable scholarly tradition, based on adequate ideals and considerable genuine achievement. But as compared with Europe, our scholars are scattered over a vast territory and—except for occasions like the present—we are forced to toil alone without the zest that springs from companionship and a ready, personal exchange of ideas. Moreover let us not forget that in certain fields of research the larger problems of investigation had necessarily to await the solution of minor problems of editing. This is particularly true of Spanish, for instance, where serviceable school and college texts had for a long time to be the first consideration. Yet it may not be amiss to remind our critic that Bonilla y San Martin in the preface to a long forgotten Spanish novel has a *diablo cojuelo* lift the roofs from Spanish book-shops filled with enviable American editions of Spanish Classics. Professor Spingarn knows that Ticknor's *History of Spanish Literature* was a pioneer work in its field, but apparently he does not know that Fitzmaurice-Kelly acknowledges his debt to many an American monograph for the improvement he has made on Ticknor.

The fact is—and it needs a lot of reiteration in this age of journalistic slapdash—that scholarship is a meticulous undertaking. It cannot be conjured into being merely by good-will or what is called inspiration or brilliancy. Doubtless great scholars are born, just like poets. Still more are they made, like journeymen. "La psychologie historique," says Gaston Paris, thus designating the sum total of our humanistic endeavor, "ne se développe que grâce à une infinité de recherches extrêmement précises et souvent extrêmement ténues; elle est peut-être, à l'heure qu'il est, la plus arriérée

des sciences, et cela s'explique par son importance et sa complexité mêmes: l'anthropologie, l'éthnographie, la géographie, l'histoire des faits, celle des lois, des mœurs, des religions, des philosophies, des sciences, des arts, des lettres, doivent d'abord lui apporter leurs résultats . . . Grâce à la minutieuse exactitude, à la méthode sévère, à la critique à la fois large et rigoureuse qu'on exige maintenant de ceux qui font de l'histoire littéraire, celle-ci pourra bientôt présenter à la science dont elle dépend . . . un tribut vraiment utile et prêt à être utilisé."⁴ The great French scholar wrote these words in 1885. Since then much water, both clear and muddy, has flowed beneath the philological bridge. Yet the essential tenets of Gaston Paris are true today. Eloquence—*Beredsamkeit*—is not the same thing as scholarship. Time, which is our best ally because it is so merciless to the rhetorician, will inevitably draw the distinction. Or to carry out the eschatology of the metaphor: "In my opinion," said Gildersleeve to an audience at the University of Chicago, "the sawdust of learning will make a hotter fire than the shavings of rhetoric."⁵ And from the same powerful personality came long ago the exhortation: "It is better to be a plodding man of science than a mouthing and phrasing rhetorician; and we have every right to show impatience with literary *bric-a-brac* in our calling, and to insist on technical training for the critic of Plato and the eulogist of Demosthenes."⁶

But it is time for us to *restourner à nos moutons* whom we left straying outside of Professor Spingarn's stronghold. To take arms against the bogey of the "practical" in our scholarship—as so many others have done before me—would be idle repetition unless it amounted to something more than saying:

The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is the lamp unlit and the ungirt loin.

⁴ *Poésie du moyen âge*, p. xii.

⁵ *University Record*, VI, 53.

⁶ *Johns Hopkins University Circular*, no. 150, p. 11.

For if our scholarship is good and our faith is sound—as I venture to affirm they are—then they must contain within themselves the means of stirring a public whose dormant inner life has not yet been roused. It remains, however, to state what these means are and how to make them effective.

First, and above all, let us practice patience. It is the teacher's virtue—it is also the scholar's. But, in so doing, let us be conscious of the rôle we have to play; the liberty of the scholar, like all other liberties, is born of the union of consciousness and strength. The well-known *Sitzfleisch* of the Germans has achieved victories which the Germans might well have taken to heart when other things than scholarship were at stake. America has yet to learn that valuable discoveries are not made overnight. The remedy, in my estimation, is not to cultivate erudition less but to apply it more assiduously to the problems we have in hand. A glance at tomorrow's program will show how numerous they are. Whether or not they will become "vital" to a larger circle than our own, will depend primarily upon our own attitude. Yet we know beforehand that no one of the topics under discussion will amount to much unless we have the patience to bring the whole weight of our scholarship to bear upon it and then to await the verdict of Time. The most significant work on the Old French epic—Bédier's *Légendes épiques*—was not the product of a single year or of a single mind; it was the result rather of a long period of exploration in which the true path had been blazed independently by an Austrian and an American investigator. Thus, as Professor Armstrong so aptly reminds us: *Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre* ("There's always a right moment comes to him who is canny in waiting"), and unless I read the present horoscope amiss we shall not, as a body, have to wait so very long. Such essays as Professor Spingarn's should fill us with new hope. Certainly, the materialism of the masses is getting some rude buffets. Our so-called young radicals are ruffling not only shallow waters but also

the deeper streams of our national complacency. In every direction, there is among our youth a current of protest against our spiritual shyness, our tendency to conform, our trust—born of fear—that our intellectual progress depends on “organization and administration as opposed to individual effort.” All of which receives a fitting climax in Mr. Piccoli’s quotation from a Chinese friend that “an American university is an athletic association in which certain opportunities for study are provided for the feeble-bodied.” It is hopeful, I say, when we thoughtfully swallow such a gibe from a foreigner, while, at the same time, we bend our efforts to mend our ways.

Thus, I optimistically see signs that we are preparing for better days. Is not one of America’s best-sellers, Van Wyck Brook’s *Gilded Age*, an indication, that, as a nation, we are not only able but also ready to measure the average American outlook on life by genuine humanistic standards? *Main Street* and Haldeman-Julius’ *Dust* may seem like freshets as compared with the sociological ocean of a Balzac or a Dickens, but again they are a promise of a brighter future in which our literature—and with it our art and our scholarship—shall be energized into a pulsating national culture.

Meantime, patience appears to me to be the scholar’s primal asset in this era of change and uncertainty; provided always patience is not made synonymous with indolence or with self-interest. But where everybody, the ignorant and hasty as well as the wise and learned, is ready to pronounce judgment, it is well to have a few solid souls who, unlike La Fontaine’s reed, do not bend to every wind that blows. The true scholar knows that certain things said by Plato and Aristotle, by Dante and Aquinas, by Goethe and Herder, by Gaston Paris, and Lanson, are eternally true. The point of view may change, the emphasis may shift, but the scholar’s aim is to see things *sub specie aeternitatis*—and, as an ideal, anything short of this is failure.

But are we, one may ask, always actively engaged in putting our patience to the tests? At present our colleges

and universities are experimenting with a course on Contemporary Civilization. Columbia, Amherst, Dartmouth, and a host of other institutions, alarmed at the undergraduate's lack of interest in study are seeking to stimulate it anew. Your distinguished chairman of last year expressed his well-grounded doubts as to the wisdom of resorting to such a palliative—for palliative it necessarily is when we relegate to a group of teachers what should have been the business of each one of them. "To see all in the one" is the concern of every teacher, of every scholar, carrying the enthusiasm for his calling with him; and who has—or should have—a closer contact with "life" than the teacher of Modern Languages? Yet no argument can dam a stream of tendency. If then the "general course" is a certainty, just as Wells' *Outline of History* and Van Loon's *The Story of Mankind* are certainties, let us not take a stand against this new benevolence. On the contrary, seeing what patience may achieve, let us contribute our moiety toward doing the thing well—as well as, under the circumstances, it can be done. The scholar will at least know what is feasible and what not, whether there is a sincere probing of the world's problems, whether such a course is a demonstration of real knowledge, or a grand and delightful gesture like Cyrano's in the play. This is a service that scholarship can render and, rendering it, fulfill its function.

My second specific, though no less hortatory, is a bit more critical. And it amounts to saying: Let the scholar stand up for his ideals.

Nothing of course is so blatant as advertising, and I very much doubt whether the *Selbstanzeige* of the *Germanisch-romanische Monatschrift*, if transplanted to this country, would raise us in the public esteem, let alone sell our books. But, if I may use a homely image, the American scholar is not unlike the canine in Rabelais' *Prologue* who, finding a bone filled with marrow, keeps its precious contents to himself:

Si veu l'avez—says Rabelais—vous avez peu noter de quelle devotion il le guette, de quel soin il le garde, de quel ferveur il le tient, de quel pru-

dence il l'entomme, de quel affection il le brise, et de quel diligence il le sugce.

American scholarship is still largely on the defensive. The scholar, as a rule, is too easily silenced with a pittance and a few hours of leisure for what is generously called his "research work" in order to make the collective headway he should either in his community or in his nation. By and large, we encourage our universities, through our own humility, to recruit their faculties with "harmless and guileless" teachers rather than with forceful and original personalities. Most American universities now recognize research in the humanities as a *desideratum*, an ornament so-to-speak of the scholar, a fringe on the lingerie of learning; but that it is a necessity, without which universities are such only in name, is not, I maintain, commonly held. To be sure, there are always notable exceptions; and other organizations besides our own are alive to the perils of the case. For if research in the humanities is necessary, then it is worth doing well and should be backed by all the resources the universities can command. This would require considerable division of labor, a clearer recognition than we now have of what is a graduate school, a definite apportionment of professors to it, etc. In short, the scholar would have to be rewarded for scholarship, and primarily for nothing else. The American Association of University Professors has recently published some interesting observations on the subject. Yet illuminating as these are, they will be as effective as a fly caught in amber, unless, somehow or other, our administrators will take them to heart. And here surely the laissez-faire attitude will get us nowhere.

What scholarship really needs, I think, is a judicious and well-directed offensive: in behalf of its ideals, its personnel, and its service to society. And the more concrete the instances, the more useful our offensive will prove. For example, when in the *New Republic* (XXXI, 336) P. L. points the finger of scorn at A List of American Doctoral Dissertations Printed in 1920 and then includes in his de-

rision Oliver Towles' *Prepositional Phrases of Asseveration and Adjuration in Old and Middle French*, we might as well join in the laughter. Certainly, a defense of Towles, at this late date, would be worse than useless. However, who is to blame for this quixotic thrust at the grist-mill of our Ph.D.'s? We cannot condemn P. L., for irony is part of his job. To my humble thinking, it is not the system that is here at fault, but the fact that we have never taken the trouble to explain intelligently to the American mind what that system is. To judge merely by titles, a dissertation on *Vergil's Influence on the Renaissance*, if it did not win P. L.'s approval might at least have escaped his scorn—for it is quite clear that P. L. knows and appreciates the Classics. Nevertheless, as a dissertation-subject such a choice would have courted dangers that any specialist who has any inkling of the field could at once have pointed out.

This is only one instance of the misconception that even the best of outsiders has of our function. Because of our silence, the layman does not know that a dissertation is primarily an exercise in scientific accuracy, a symbol that the dissertator is able to wield his tools, a demonstration of a merciless objective method—perhaps alas! the only such demonstration the candidate will have the stoicism to make—rather than a real enrichment of human knowledge, which in any case is reserved for the few to achieve and for which such training in accuracy is the only preparation humanly conceivable. I have no illusions about the value of dissertations as a class. I will grant you that the archetype has not yet been found and that meanwhile there is room, plenty of it, for improvement. We might even, like the Curate and the Barber in *Don Quijote*, make a *donoso y grande escrutinio* of all the dissertations in our libraries. Only I venture to predict solemnly that before we applied the torch to so much printing, we would take ample and careful notes on this point or that, on the Inchoative Function of the French Past Absolute, on just what parts of the Body survived in Later Germanic Dialects, on why Sir Percival resembles a

Great Fool, on which assonances in the *Roland* are *echt-nachweisbar* and which not, etc., etc.—lest these and a host of other detailed problems assail us at an inopportune moment and put us to shame.

For the Modern Language teacher knows, though he may not always admit the fact, that his teaching is a constant test of his scholarship. To the first-year graduate student a course in Old French may seem futile, especially when his heart longs for Modern English fiction, but place him in a high-school class in English and let a pupil ask him why “veal” is not called “calf” and “beef” is not called “ox,” and his longing may be reversed. The layman may think it a waste of time to investigate end-consonants in French, ask him to pronounce one and he may learn to appreciate Professor Barker’s discovery that they must be sounded as if “initial.” Such examples all of us here could multiply a hundredfold, each from the wealth of his own experience.

That being the case, has not the time come for less modesty and more asseveration and adjuration on our own part? Why leave this rôle to the French prepositions or to H. L. Mencken’s oscillations in American Philology? The abusive controversies of Renaissance scholars had at least the value that they let no one forget that scholarship was alive, whereas there is sober fact in Professor Spingarn’s statement that the American University of today is “timid and anaemic because it lacks that quixotic fire which inheres in every act of faith.” Biologically speaking, the scholar needs the refreshment of direct action. He also needs the encouragement that comes from legitimate recognition. If the public lack enlightenment, why not tell them our story, as the scientists are telling theirs, in a series of popular manuals which the average person can understand. Here is a task that some of our University Presses can legitimately undertake. In the long run it might prove far more useful—and certainly more remunerative—than the multiplication of existing types of journals and monographs, which in themselves may be excellent but because of their number and

diversity are already a serious problem to our libraries and bibliographers, not to mention subscribers. If the sciences have their "romance," what shall we say of philology? The progress that has been made in the various fields of syntax, etymology, semantics, literary history, etc. would make a fascinating account, if properly sifted and presented. As can be seen from the recent monumental work of Jespersen, *Language, its Nature, Development and Origin*, there are countless respects in which the history of language abounds in matters of general human interest. And owing to phonetics, the phonologies of the past can be made as vivid as the "thin Irish pronunciation" that survives in the old lines:

Poor Lucinda
Was burnt to a cinder,
And that was the end of "she";
For once she was tender,
But now she is tinder,—
How that poor girl suffered for me!

"I began," says Gildersleeve, "as a literary aspirant. I have wound up as a statistical syntactician." "Yet," continues this veteran of the philological guild, "I would reiterate the confession of my faith in the formulae of my youth, my belief in the wider conception of philological work, in the necessity of bringing all our special training into relation with the whole of philological truth, the life of the world, the life of humanity."

But my conscience tells me that I should exhort less and demonstrate more or my audience will be justified in imitating Panurge, who "sans autre chose dire, jette en pleine mer son mouton criant et bellant." Still I should not be true to my exordium if I did not insist, as my third and last point, that our teaching should be made to rest firmly on our scholarship.

As has been said over and over again, teaching is to scholarship as "art" is to "science." In the exercise of our profession we may pursue the one without the other, but if we do so I cannot help thinking that it is an imperfect thing that

we pursue. My colleagues in the University of Chicago assure me that Michelson is such a great scientist because he is also an excellent teacher: one who knows how to demonstrate simply the discoveries he has made. Such a man you will say is exceptional, but there is no exception to the rule that a good teacher must be scholarly. While teaching is a talent, yet it is one that does not utterly elude analysis; and one of the basic principles of good teaching is that it springs full-armed from the mind of the person who knows his subject thoroughly. Knowing a subject well, it is a comparatively simple matter to devise methods for its presentation, provided of course we really take the time and the pains to do so intelligently. I am by no means blind to the fact that—at least, in our over-stocked college-classes—we generally do neither; that if the teaching of language and literature were as serious a matter as, let us say, the teaching of engineering or dentistry, we should long ago have made our colleges remedy an intolerable situation; whereas here we are struggling on, year after year, with unwieldy classes of ill-assorted students, trusting more to fortune than to forethought that somehow our difficulties will iron themselves out.

However that may be, nothing can be gained by the assumption that in the Modern Language classes we need teachers and not scholars. Substitute “method” for “knowledge,” and you will commit the fallacy that underlies most of the cheap educationalism of modern times. Professor Dewey, who chides us for “sending out men to meet the exigencies of contemporary life clothed in the chain-armor of antiquity,”⁷ recently asked: “What will happen if teachers become sufficiently courageous and emancipated to insist that education means the creation of the discriminating mind, a mind that prefers not to dupe itself or to be the dupe of others?” His answer is: “They will have to cultivate the habit of suspended judgment, of scepticism, of desire

⁷ *New Republic*, XXXII, 140.

for evidence, of appeal to observation rather than sentiment, discussion rather than bias, inquiry rather than conventional idealizations." Exactly, one may add, the teacher must return to his scholarship, and it may turn out after all that the "chain-armor of antiquity" is for some people a safer garment than the rolled stocking of modernity. All of which amounts to saying with Brunot: "*Il faut enseigner des choses vraies*"; even in French Grammar, that nightmare of the methodists, this is the case.

At the same time, there is a difficulty in this connection which inheres perhaps more in the Modern Languages than, for example, in Physics or History, and which, in all of our discussions, we are prone to overlook. The teacher of physics or history, assuming that he is something more than a makeshift or a propagandist, will capitalize the results of research in such a way that they will be directly reflected in his teaching. The physicist who knows nothing about "relativity" is simply not a physicist and be he ever so good an expositor of his subject. The historian who has not considered objectively the evidence he presents to his class, cannot hope nowadays to hold anybody's interest. In the case of Modern Philology, however, research and teaching are not related in the same *obvious* way. Who cares whether X is an authority on the Peasant Vocabulary of George Sand, if the works of George Sand are never the subject of his teaching? Of what value to others is my knowledge of the Arthurian Cycle, unless I am giving a course on Geoffrey of Monmouth, Chrétien de Troyes, or Tennyson? And my college or university may never be able to give me that opportunity. The argument is of course specious, as we all know, but that does not prevent it from bobbing up time and again, and at the most awkward moments.

I have not time to answer it here in detail; nor is that at all necessary before this audience. But I should like to point out that—in my estimation—there are at least two reasons why the teaching of Modern Languages so often fails to produce in our students those higher results which

we had so fondly expected, and why it does not obtain from the college-graduate and his associates the support and encouragement our efforts seem to merit. In the first place, it is simply because we do not stir the student's imagination through the fruits of our scholarship. And, secondly, culture, of which we are—for better or for worse—the chief purveyors cannot be directly taught; it must be felt or experienced. The two things are so closely related that they amount to the same thing. For we do not aim to make the undergraduate primarily a scholar; that is the work of our graduate schools. What we are aiming to do is to awaken and cultivate the undergraduate's taste, his judgment, his love of truth, his hate of sham—and, if we succeed in our attempt, we give him culture. It is our privilege to do this through the *medium* of language and literature; the lives that men have led, the thoughts they have had, the words they have spoken—all this and more is open to us for interpretation. Obviously we cannot interpret it all. But each of us can seek the truth at some point, infinitesimal as it may seem, and with the experience thus gained he can illuminate in an ever-widening circle more and more material; and, above all, he can lead others to follow his example—which is the recompense of all good teaching, graduate or undergraduate. In the final analysis, the teacher is only a leader. Some of you will express these things differently, many of you will express them better; but the fact remains, I believe—and I am now speaking “practically”—that it matters little in what channels our scholarship moves. The chief consideration is that it does move and thereby enables us to move others; for “men will work for the joy of comprehension, for the joy of beauty, for the joy of creative construction, as they will not work for less inspiring ends.”

The same British Report on *Modern Studies* (p. 46) from which I have just quoted sums up my main contention as follows:

All study has some moral values; Modern Studies are the study of man in all his higher activities, and thus may have a special moral value; but

we need say no more of that. We are, and must be, concerned with Modern Studies as an instrument of culture, and by culture we mean that training which tends to develop the higher faculties, the imagination, the sense of beauty, and the intellectual comprehension.

One object of scholarship, everyone admits, is to add to the world's knowledge. Its other object—just as real, but not so generally admitted—is to make the teacher a truer, and therefore a better, exponent of culture. As for the Modern Languages, scholarship may do something more, but it should do nothing less.

Thus, as I pull in my reins before coming to a full stop, I would re-affirm my faith in the ideals for which this Association has stood for nearly half a century. Scholarship, like art and science, takes time, whereas life is notoriously short. I know that I am repeating a platitude. Yet in a country like the United States, where railroads have been built in a fortnight and cities have arisen in a generation, one cannot expect thoroughness to be regarded as a virtue or haste as a vice. Therefore a profession like ours is still necessarily at a discount. But for this very reason we Modern Language scholars should gather strength from our past achievements, and hope from our present opportunities, confident that the truth is our goal and that only the truth can set men free. "An educated man," said Lord Morley in a moment of Aristotelian optimism, "is one who knows when a thing is proved and when it is not. An uneducated man does not know." This is at once a challenge and a promise to Modern Language scholarship of the future. It rests with us to make it a realization.